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A Single Strand: The *Nsyilxcin* Speaking People's *Tmix*^{w} Knowledge as a Model for Sustaining a Life-Force Place

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Based on both historical research and personal immersion, this chapter explores how Syilx ethics and governance are linked to land use and regenerative conservation of ecosystems. I present the perspective that the *nsyilxcin* speaking people's ecological knowledge represents a Syilx environmental ethic that is based in a knowledgeable land use connected to wisdom in Syilx governance traditions, which persists into contemporary practice. I show how this lived, Indigenous ethic can serve as a model for the type of "living in place" needed today for sustainability.

Research for my dissertation, *Constructing Indigeneity: Syilx Okanagan Oraliture and Tmix*^{w}*centrism* (Armstrong, 2010), is central to the points raised in this chapter. This research focused on support for the theory that the Syilx people's ecological knowledge is the basis of everyday practice, which expresses an ethic that was not a form of mere intuitive morality toward their food source, or a practice of social anthropomorphism in the form of simplistic reverence for their relationships with their food sources, often linked to the terms *primitive* and *hunter-gatherers*.

I refer to the entirety of the *nsyilxcin* (those who speak Syilx language) groups as the *Syilx* to avoid local ethno-geographic reduction into separate groups speaking the same language, including Slocan, Lakes, Sanpoil, Southern Okanagan, Northern Okanagan, Similkameen, and the Kettle (Spier, 1938; Ray, 1939; Teit and Boas, 1975), and to avoid terms utilized to collect the ethno-geographic groupings into a one cultural profile among other Salishan speaking groups, including the use of the terms *Okanagan* (Ross, 1969) and *Colville-Okanagan* (Mattina, 1987; Kuipers, 2002).

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The *nsyilxcin* speaking people, linguistically referred to as Colville-Okanagan, are associated with a large territory of occupation. In Canada, the *nsyilxcin* speaking people occupy a territory covering vast drainage areas of the Fraser and Columbia River systems between two major mountain ranges in inland British Columbia. In the United States, the *nsyilxcin* speaking people occupied vast areas of the Upper Columbia River system and its larger tributaries, the Okanagan, the Kettle, and the Sanpoil Rivers in eastern Washington State.

At contact, the Salishan language speaking peoples, of which the Syilx (*nsyilxcin* speaking) are one group, occupied a large territory covering vast areas of British Columbia reaching down to cover much of Washington State, much of northern Idaho, and part of northern Montana (Kuipers, 2002: viii).

The focus of my research was to study and confirm that the Syilx society embodies an ethic that maintains values and informs practices in land use and economy. My study concluded that the Syilx practiced a form of regenerative conservation of the lands they used over and over again, as the outcome of a society-wide environmental ethic based in *ecological knowledge*. An important feature of that practice is that the Syilx people were not nomadic or seminomadic. Even a cursory reading of ethnographical information demonstrates that the *nsyilxcin* peoples and indeed all Salishan peoples, whether coastal, riverine, or plateau, never simply wandered about following game, searching for food along the way. Central to the Syilx concept of sustainability, I confirmed that it was an egalitarian ethic that permeated their society and governance system and which included all local life forms. Research also confirms that the ecological knowledge required for securing sustenance, security, and the capacity to thrive is transferred from generation to generation, embedded in the language and in oral story, and in practices that produce social and environmental sustainability characterized by a one hundred percent land regenerative model.

The Syilx word *tmix*^{w} refers to the ecology of the land, including all life forms of a place, consisting of many relationships. The concept of *tmix*^{w} emanates from the Syilx language and is illuminated in the oral story tradition. The word allows access to the Syilx concept of the human duty to nature. Examining the word *tmix*^{w} allows us to perceive the depth of the Syilx knowledge of ecology; it is a way to see existence in that *tmix*^{w} is the life force of a place. Seeing the image in the word in the particular way that *nsyilxcin* as an Indigenous language carries nature images generates meaning, in that the word *tmix*^{w} literally displays many strands

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continually emanating and fanning outward from one source that is not visible. The image provides a dynamic view of what the ecology of the land actually does and refers, as an image, to every life form of a place, including the human, continuously emanating toward an invisible source. It is an Indigenous view. Nature is life force when seen as *tmix*^{w}. Each life form is a single strand of the life force of that place and requires others of that place to have existed and to continue to exist. In that way *tmix*^{w} captures the dynamics of the myriad relationships that make that place what it is. Syilx humans rightfully are seen as a single strand of that life force.

The view of Syilx being *tmix*^{w} themselves is a necessary element in their philosophy of egalitarianism toward all life forms. That view of *tmix*^{w} is a systems view and essential to understanding that a systems view is foundational to Syilx thought, and that it is constructed from a knowledgeable position based in the meaning of *tmix*^{w}. Syilx philosophy is centered on and based in an understanding that the ecology they are part of is *tmix*^{w}. Their philosophy is an Indigenous ethos specific to the meaning of *tmix*^{w} and should therefore be called a *tmix*^{w}-centric ethic. The meaning of the word *tmix*^{w} in the *nsyilxcin* language has retained the complexity of meaning throughout antiquity to the present in all aspects of daily life, governance, and formal religious practice. The Syilx philosophy can be appreciated as an alternative way of valuing nature in that it articulates the human moral duty to *tmix*^{w}. The Syilx social paradigm can be seen as constructed from the deep ecological knowledge of the human responsibility that must reside in each generation and must move continuously forward through language, practice, and oral story. Syilx knowledge can also be seen as a systems view, which is strongly expressed in their language, their stories, and their social construct.

The Syilx response to the moral issue of human utility of other life forms is also the foundation of an egalitarian type of governance the Syilx practiced, which was also extended outward in relations with other groups surrounding their territory. Syilx ecological knowledge can be seen in the judicious practices arising out of the wisdom that the ecology of their territory is a living whole system that requires human compliance with its regenerative requirements in order to interact with it in a nondestructive way. The Syilx social matrix reveals knowledge that whole-system regeneration is grounded in an ethic for which the fundamental requirement is nondestructive land use.

Syilx governance demonstrates a sophisticated insight that a devotion to full regenerative land use requires that the highest level of authority for

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resource guardianship has to be grounded in local knowledge, requiring a deep level of cooperation and solidarity among groups in the whole of the system. In that way the systems view can be seen as an essential element in the Syilx egalitarian approach to governance. A *tmix*^{w}-centric ethic requires governance that must socially ensure that the exercise of local authority is willingly supported by surrounding groups in a mutual concord of human interdependency to enjoy system-wide reciprocal benefits. The Syilx knowledge – that ethical conduct within nature is based in reciprocity – informs the active principles of collective reverence for the lives that nature gifts as sustenance as a return for participation in the continual regeneration of each life form.

Various ethnographical studies of the *nsyilxcin* groups, including Hill-Tout (1911), Ray (1939), Spier (1938), Teit (1975), and Bouchard (1998), reveal that the *nsyilxcin* maintained permanently specific resource areas where they lived, while village harvest areas in other locations were ready at different seasons. These locations were dwelling sites in their appropriate season, just as winter village sites located in the warmest areas of the valley floor were occupied about the same amount of time as each of the spring, summer, and fall sites. Walters in Spier (1938) reports that at all seasons of the year families lived away from the winter villages because single families moved throughout harvest zones, that villages along rivers had denser populations only in the winter, and that the chief of each village always knew the whereabouts of villagers because four or five sites were inhabited simultaneously by one band (Spier, 1938: 87). Winter dwelling sites seem to be categorized by the ethnographers as "permanent" only by the criterion of having immovable winter-appropriate structures. However, the fact that other dwellings were seasonally appropriate and transportable from one dwelling site to the next does not make other seasonal sites less permanently occupied or the people nomadic.

Immanently clear from the ethnographic reports and contemporary harvest practice is that people of each group and each village have knowledge of each site, including exactly when each is ready for occupation. As ethnobotanist Nancy Turner mentions, in any given village area the Okanagan-Colville had easy access to at least one, and more often two or three, major vegetation zones, as well as numerous habitats such as swamps, meadows, talus slopes, river banks, lakes, and rocky outcrops (Turner et al., 1980: 5). In Spier (1938), Post reports that each family went to the same vicinity each year for fishing, digging, and picking, and wintered at the sites, changing only if wood were scarce. He further explains that most families went to the same hunting ground every fall,

and their sons continued to do so after their fathers died; also, women of a village gathered plant foods as a group and went to the same places year after year (Spier, 1938: 11–22). In a real sense, each village of the *Nsyilxcin* utilized and maintained, into the contemporary, permanent occupation and use of their land like a huge seasonal perma-garden. The "Syilx perma-garden" is a type of vertical ecological land-use system with vast natural areas for harvest beginning in the spring on the valley floor, in the summer moving up to the mountain foothills, and by fall up to the alpine forest levels. The Syilx then move back in the valley floor for the winter.

An undeniable fact in *nsyilxcin* territory is that plant foods have extremely short harvest windows as a result of the semi-arid interior summer heat. Exact ecological knowledge of weather effects on different locations, about when and at which altitudes the various harvests are ready, is an absolute essential. In the same way, knowledge of migrating bird and fish spawning cycles in different locations at different seasons in different weather is critical. The grazing, calving, and mating movement patterns of deer, moose, and elk, as well as the hibernating and life-cycles of food mammals, is crucial local knowledge. A long-term local basis of continued interaction with a specific area is the only way that level of knowledge could be held and transferred.

The Syilx environmental ethic is underpinned by socially and individually institutionalized practices of respect. Ethnographic studies of the Syilx reveal evidence, visible and recognizable to European eyes, of conservation practice and regulation exercised by fisheries and hunting chiefs and village subchiefs. Their regulatory powers were law. Chance refers to subchiefs as "subsistence governors." He highlights the specific example of the Kettle Falls Salmon Chief, who supervised the equal distributions of salmon to all tribes gathered during the salmon run from morning till sundown. He speculates that only then would the extent of the day's catch be known (Chance, 1973: 20).

Less visible than the chiefs were other regulators such as local head men and head women, who determined or regulated harvest takes and decided on which harvest areas were open for roots, berries, fresh fish, birds, and small mammals, as well as deciding which sites were to be left to another year. Spier (1938) says of the Southern Okanagan group that in every village, other than the village in which the chief is residing, there is a head man, not appointed by the chief, who directed the communal hunting and fishing of the village (98). Even a cursory search of oral and written records reveals similar common practices in every village and in

every area of the Syilx. Invisible to external eyes are many best-practice schemes, harvest practices, and regulations still observed diligently into the contemporary. Such Syilx folk knowledge continues and resides in anecdotal information on plant harvesting methods and comprises a vast system of commonly known local regulatory practices.

The utmost respect for plants and plant communities is a core foundational element in all Syilx gathering practices. Turner (1980), who included my parents, an aunt, and two uncles among her expert informants in her research, *Ethnobotany of the Okanagan*, comments that all plants, particularly those important as foods and medicines, were regarded with the utmost respect and reverence. She reports that many Okanagan-Colville legends "refer to plants in their original state and describe the circumstances of their transformation to their present form." She reports that about 130 of the 260 species of plants known to the Okanagan-Colville were used as medicines (Turner et al., 1980: 152–53).

Personal observations and experience of best practices includes the knowledge expressed in common field harvest routines. In the same way that European gardening wisdom is more common-folk practice, Syilx field harvest practices are simply passed on in the field as the *best way* to do it. Some general best-practice methods observed informally for different plant harvests include: counting how many to take from within a measured standing radius; measuring distances between plants to harvest; determining what size they must be for harvest; measuring how big a patch must be left between patches or plots harvested; alternating one field, slope, or draw from year to year; fallowing sections by poking sporadic dig holes for seeds but not taking any plants; broadcast reseeding of discarded or damaged berries; ritual bush beating or shaking after harvest; seed pod beating ceremonially; protecting newly producing areas from harvest in order to strengthen growth; and selecting specific varieties and leaving other varieties of berries.

The long-term planning knowledge utilized in the practice of annual harvesting at specific dwelling sites, as well as the Indigenous form of perma-gardening practices at such sites, are definitely not features of nomadic or even seminomadic cultures following herds or crops over vast areas to gather by chance. The evidence of informal and formal knowledge practice for maintaining local sustainability concretely identifies the Syilx land-use ethic.

Animals, fish, roots, and berries were not simply gathered without regard to their own right to exist. One of the required social institutions was the observance of gratitude rituals. Ceremonial observances

of gratitude maintained a system of society-wide ethical respect toward the lives of animals, fish, roots, and berries in their own right. Hill-Tout documents that the Okanagan observed first-fruits ceremonies through prayers offered to spirits who were supposed to preside over the operations of nature, and no one would think of picking a berry or digging a root until a feast was held (Hill-Tout, 1911: 134). Others report of the Southern Okanagan that first-fruit ceremonies were held after the first big gathering of camas, service berries, and bitterroot, with most of the band gathered at the chief's house where he stood and spoke (Spier, 1938: 32). Teit reports that the Northern Okanagan first-fruits ceremony was observed in every band before berries or roots were picked. He notes that the chief in the band made an offering on a bark tray (Teit and Boas, 1975: 291). In the first hunt, the first deer brought in by each man was distributed among the people of the camp, and this was an analog of the first-fruits rites for other products (Spier, 1938: 22). First-salmon ceremonies were carried on during the first four days each year that salmon were taken at a weir (Spier, 1938: 15).

Other more informal rituals of recognition, of relatedness, or of animals being on the same level as humans are common practices of the Syilx. Teit relates a story in the Similkameen of a hunting chief, who, taking off his cap, waved it toward the cliffs where the sheep were and spoke to them asking for their pity. He further reports that animals, especially large game, were treated with great respect, and spoken of differentially; when a bear was killed, a mourning song was sung, called the "bear song" (Teit and Boas, 1975: 291). Ethnobotanist Nancy Turner reports that medicines of all types are still treated with reverence and respect, and plants are spoken to and their help requested as they are being gathered and prepared (Turner et al., 1980: 150). While these practices might be attributed to an unsophisticated animistic belief system, the fact that they remain a prevailing, common, and contemporary practice of Syilx harvesters, hunters, and fishermen suggests that the practice was of a deeper social purpose than ancient mysticism.

Ethnographers in general agree, through information collected at different times, that the Salishan peoples of the Interior Plateau region, including the *nsyilxcin* speaking people, at early contact were peacefully organized. Ray, an ethnographer of the Sanpoil and Nespelem areas of the Syilx territory, in his study, *Cultural Relations in the Plateau of Northwestern America*, mentions that what is impressive and revealing is the pacifism that characterizes the groups of the central region (Ray, 1939: 35). He relates that Ross Cox, one of the earliest visitors to the

Syilx territory, said, "The historical stories of battle obtained are of occurrences in a past so distant that the accounts have a mythological flavor" (Ray, 1939: 79). Walters, in his study of the social structure of the Southern Okanagan Syilx territory, also points out that they evidently were a peaceful people for at least several centuries (Spier, 1938: 79).

Ethnographers disagree about how to characterize the political organization of the Salishan peoples. Ray offers that the political unit had to have been the village since no term existed for any larger political aggregation other than a term for the more inclusive dialectic division. He does note that units larger than the village did exist, but that they were social or linguistic in nature, identified by bonds of common habitat and common customs, values, religion, and language. He insists that the bonds were never political, although he observes that a striking feeling "of unity" existed among all speakers of one common Salishan dialect (Ray, 1939: 9). He notes that members of each village were subject only to their own chiefs and that the chief of one village never answered to the chief of any other village. Although collectives of villages acted together as bands, Ray maintains that these were like one large village and were unions of domestic and peacetime order (7–15). He presents a picture of what he terms the "atomistic nature of political organization" as having more than mere passive acceptance of village autonomy, in that autonomy was "strongly defended and is considered right and proper" (Ray, 1939: 4).

Studies by Spier in the Southern Okanagan area of *nsyilxcin* territory assert that each band was autonomous. The report ventures that the main factor in maintaining tribal unity must be blood relationship based on the constant intermarriage establishing blood relatives in each band. Individuals or families might fish, hunt, and establish themselves in any of the village sites belonging to an immediate or a friendly band (Spier, 1938: 73–87).

Likewise, Kroeber, in a larger study of many tribes along Pacific coastal areas of North America, observes that although there didn't appear to be a political unit other than the village, it is clear that villages existed in a state of neutrality toward one another, linked by peaceful trade, intermarriage, and participation in each other's ceremonies and festivals. He characterizes that linking of villages to be "like nations of the civilized world" (Kroeber, 1917: 396).

For the Salishan, peaceful interaction is facilitated by the different groups' language familiarity, as well as a similarity in customs and traditions. In fact, Hill-Tout, like other ethnographers, comments that careful inquiry reveals that the Salishan cultures followed so closely that of

neighboring divisions that "a description of one is virtually a description of another" (Hill-Tout, 1911: 133). The continued practice of a pacifist social order over long periods also signifies intentional organizational methods to sustain a stable distributed system of economy and authority, particularly over such great geographical and cultural diversity.

Central to my view, as an insider of the culture and language, and my knowledge of *nsyilxcin* speaking people, is the nature of their political organization. It is clear that Salishan is a culture of peace and cooperation, and therefore the political structure does not require the hierarchical, centralized authority characteristic of and necessary to conquest or defense. Most political models available to ethnographers, and used as standards for comparison, would be those familiar to European social orders, and so political organization of another design would be invisible or at best misunderstood. An analysis of the same ethnographic information reveals the presence of a political structure maintaining a social order vastly different from the political order of conquest, defense, or capitalism.

The Salishan peoples enjoyed a peaceful political order in what may have been one of the largest collectives of local authorities operating as autonomous units of a political and economic aggregate encompassing over twenty-five Salishan language groups. The characteristic cultural interactions, in the intermarriages and inter-areal trade, should be viewed as the basis of the vast structural concord between member groups, which relied on chiefs facilitating peaceful lateral cooperation between culturally diverse and autonomous local units. This concord was reinforced by a great deal of inter-areal trade, intermarriage, and intercultural exchanges, which were observed by virtually every scholar of Salishan peoples. The groups enjoyed and achieved interdependent reciprocity, at the same time they continually reinforced the value of peaceful relations with each other, based on a strong practice of deference to the village chiefs' management of resource sites in their jurisdictions.

The leadership that had to evolve for this form of structural concord provides insight into the governance required for maintaining peace in such a large system of cooperating units. Ray reports, "Nowhere in the Plateau is chieftainship based upon wealth." He provides an insightful description of chieftainship among the Okanagan of the Sanpoil, in which it was clear that in the case of a vacancy, the village would assemble and select one of the eligible relatives of the chief by standards of honesty, sound judgment, temperament, and most importantly "skill in arbitration" (Ray, 1939: 19–20). Ray also provides solid evidence of women

serving on the council or assembly among a number of central Plateau tribes, and that female chiefs are known to the Southern Okanagan and the Lakes *nsyilxcin* speaking groups. He comments, "[I]t is quite clear that female chieftainship is here a simple outgrowth of the principle of political and sexual equality" (24).

Chance, whose historical research focuses primarily on the Colville-Okanagan of Kettle Falls, demonstrates that chieftainship is the central authority associated with inter-areal peaceful resource allocations. He provides a chart from 1830 to 1831 of visiting tribes, which lists seven Salish tribes and two non-Salish Plateau tribes camped at Kettle Falls. He details the Salmon Chief's methods for equal distributions of salmon resources among his own and the many different tribes assembled in his jurisdiction at Kettle Falls (Chance, 1973: 18–19).

Anastasio, in his doctoral research, *Intergroup Relations in the Southern Plateau*, argues that such a level of peaceful relations relied on active inter-relations. He demonstrates that there were formal intertribal mechanisms that regulated intergroup relations that permitted the peaceful settlement of intertribal disputes, as well as the co-utilization of resource sites. He points out that it was the responsibility of the whole of the larger cooperating unit to guarantee the welfare of persons, which allowed property and gift exchange between groups and which extended kinship between them (Anastasio, 1955: 91). Anastasio's research established that the political structure "was not disorganized and understandable only in the perspective of each local group; rather … it had an areal organization which was flexible and shifting within a certain range of variability" from place to place (Anastasio, 1955: 4).

From that perspective, the political organization expressed was opposite the type of political organization required for an imperialistic intent. The highest level of authority and responsibility would have been found at the village level, to maintain peaceful cooperation with other autonomous villages or units of local authority, beginning with those in one language group and progressing outward to encompass surrounding Salishan groups. The result was a high level of local resource control and, therefore, sustainability, in terms of products and their exchange. Such a level of local resource control would have generated and required a wide spectrum of cultural and political diplomacy. Constant deference to local authority as the main level of governance would have created an intelligent structure, which relied on and placed a high value on specific local ecological knowledge. Reinforcement of absolute local authority, control, and management would have formed the basis of a strong political,

economic, and social interchange culture between neighboring units. This structure would necessarily sustain an order in which no units compete for the same resources but must willingly cooperate in constant peaceful interchange and trade of goods so each can benefit reciprocally. Where resources are scarce and fragile, the tribes operate out of the *knowledge* that local autonomy is an absolute requirement for successful management to ensure full regeneration of local resources; further, it is critical to maintain autonomy in order to sustain the interdependent mutual needs and benefits of each unit as a part of a larger system of exchange reciprocity.

The languages, stories, and practices that differentiate one group from another are place-specific critical features that regenerate entire systems of knowledge. Specific and different knowledge embedded in language and stories central to their customs and practices reflects the requirements of the system for full regeneration. That ethnographic views are colored by conquest and land expansionist political structures does not change what studies of the Salishan peoples reveal. Making alliances and mutually supporting the equality of each autonomous unit in a knowledgeable concord of mutually interdependent cooperation requires knowledge of the underlying reasoning.

The Syilx construct, as well as all Plateau Salish cultures, requires a more informed definition that clearly differentiates them from agricultural, marine, nomadic, and seminomadic cultures, in order to describe their political organization. Key is the knowledge of a people who strongly defended local authority as a responsibility with unquestionable rights to steward the environment based on a strong adherence to environmental law, but which also provided opportunities for individual freedom in the philosophical expectations of self-imposed best practices that immerse every individual, family, community, and nation in the knowledge of why adherence is necessary. This personalized level of stewardship, resulting in the Syilx ethic reflected in social institutions and political leadership, is possible only through an accessible localized long-term knowledge of the requirements of every resource.

The long-term knowledge that connects the past to the present and the present to the future is a Syilx societal ethic, defined by the Syilx's relationship with the land. Long-term knowledge of the environment is framed and transferred in Syilx stories. The perspective of humans as being themselves *tmix*^{w} allows access to the Syilx view of human existence within nature as life-force. The Syilx knowledge of required codes of conduct toward each other utilizes story as a form of intergenerational

discourse directed at human conduct in relation to the environment, and is expressed as the human responsibility of the inherited state of being *tmix*^{w} themselves as life-force. It is based in the knowledge of having an established equilibrium within the dynamic interdependence that is nature, and is focused on the concept of the human being continuously bringing her/himself into equilibrium with the inhabitants of the life-force place. This equilibrium requires being continuously guided by a philosophy to re-constitute and engage as Indigenous to that place.

The Syilx social paradigm incorporates knowledge of life forms affected by the human as a part of everyday life. Indigeneity as a philosophy of sustaining a life-force place is aptly imaged in the Nsyilxcen language and is situated as a framework of good practice in terms of attitude, lifestyle, and land use directed toward full regeneration of the whole life-force place as a functioning order. To be Syilx is to continuously sustain a unity of existence within the generation-to-generation, year-to-year, and season-to-season cycle of the life-force place. As one of many strands, being Syilx means one is continuously being bound in that expectation with others on the land to form one strong thread. This strong thread, which says that humans must learn to move forward together, is a social moral imperative. This concept is the fundamental meaning of being Indigenous. It is the fundamental meaning of being Syilx. The science involved in acquiring that level of knowledge is based in long-term careful observation and transferred through a portable documentation method in the language and stories, continuously reflecting the desired relationships within the local ecology.

Clearly allying with Indigenous peoples currently living their Indigeneity *in-situ* and the fostering of those peoples re-indigenizing themselves through local customs, laws, and languages in a contemporary context, is fundamental to the reinstatement of a contemporary form of *Indigeneity*. This requires radical changes in social processes and new approaches to governance. It would produce a transformative shift from a framework of control and domination to one of collaboration that in so doing would institute new ways of being. The shift toward constructing such mechanisms would be a pronouncement of environmental justice for all peoples. As the late John Mohawk said, "I think that when we talk about re-indigenization, we need a much larger, bigger umbrella to understand it. It's not necessarily about the Indigenous Peoples of a specific place; *it's about re-indigenizing the peoples of the planet*. It's about us looking at the whole thing in the broadest of possible ways" (Nelson, 2008: 259). Whether the concept of re-indigenization is integrated into scientific

language, in terms of caring for the resilience of ecological forces specific to different places, or into a more local cultural idiom, it is an intrinsic part of a required environmental ethos. First steps toward re-indigenization require a dialogue about the questions that confront modern society – questions related to the global mobility of populations and the resultant global monoculturing and dislocation from knowledge of place. Re-indigenization in that sense is less about how long people have been in one place but more about embracing and fostering society-wide knowledge and ethics of the specific requirements of *tmix*^{w} in each place, while creating institutions at local levels to meet those requirements.

In conclusion, the model of the Syilx people is one that demonstrates how society might rethink itself. The Syilx are one group among a highly successful society of over twenty-five other Salishan speaking groups who coexisted next to each other. Together they held in place a vast intertribal level of knowledge intent on peacefully instituting required social codes to insure the land's regenerative capacity. The "indigenous" construct of intertribal mechanisms that interlocked the groups into a vast network operating like the different cells of a body provides a valuable vision of the environmental ethic now required in society.

In the Syilx perspective, humans must perceive how the *tmix*^{w} regenerate themselves and know, therefore, how humans can move forward in unity with the life-force of their place. We must know that human beings are intertwined and bound with the *tmix*^{w} as one strand of many that produces the regeneration of other strands. Sustaining, strengthening, and protecting each *tmix*^{w} in an equality of existence through the cycles of days, seasons, and years requires the knowledge that being human is a *tmix*^{w} responsibility.

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